



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls MT 59405
February 5, 2003

Ladies and Gentlemen:

FWP proposes partner with the City of Great Falls, Recreational Trails Inc., and the Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) to build a tunnel under Giant Springs Road at the junction of Giant Springs Road and the River's Edge Trail. This tunnel will allow pedestrians and bikers to cross Giant Springs Road without exposing themselves to traffic.

Attached to this letter is your copy of the Draft Environmental Assessment evaluating this project. Questions about this project should be directed to Giant Springs State Park Manager Dan Smith at 454-5858.

Comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. Tuesday, March 11, 2003 and can be mailed to:

Giant Springs Tunnel
Giant Springs State Park
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405

Or e-mailed to: dsmith@state.mt.us

Thanks for your interest and help with this project.

Sincerely,

Mike Aderhold
Regional Supervisor

MEPA/NEPA/23-1-110 MCA CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of Proposed State Action

FWP proposes partner with the City of Great Falls, Recreational Trails Inc., and the Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) to build a tunnel under Giant Springs Road and the Junction of Giant Springs Road and the River's Edge Trail. This tunnel will allow pedestrians and bikers to cross Giant Springs Road without exposing themselves to traffic.

2. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action

FWP has authority to provide development and access for public recreation. **23-2-101 MCA.**

3. Name of Project

River's Edge Trail / Giant Springs Road Tunnel.

4. Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor (if other than the agency)

City of Great Falls
P.O. Box 5021
Great Falls MT 59403-5021

5. If Applicable:

Estimated Construction/Commencement Date April 2003

Estimated Completion Date 7/1/03.

Current Status of Project Design (% complete) 90%

6. Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range and township)

Cascade County: Sec 32, R4E, T21N.

7. Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

(a) Developed:
residential 0 acres
industrial 0 acres

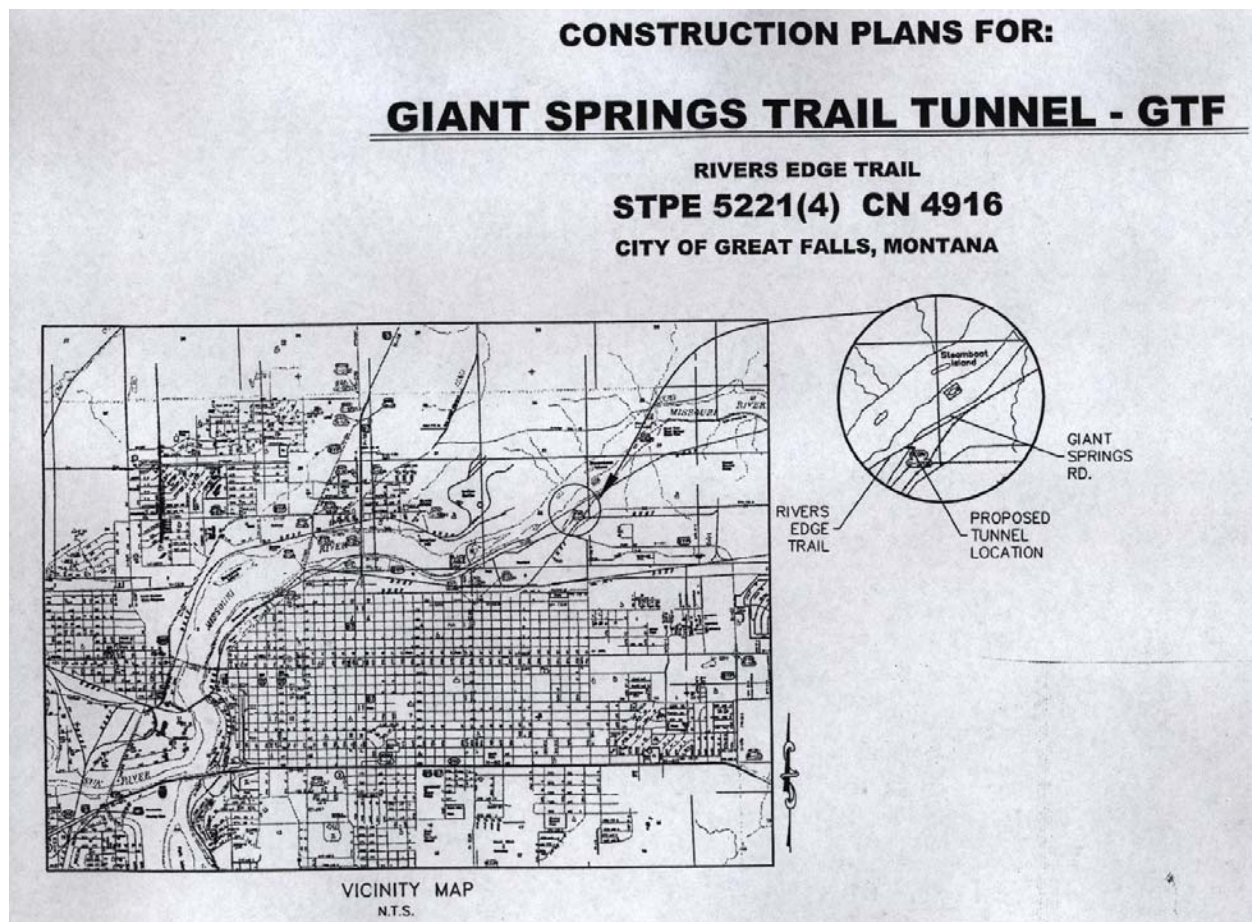
(b) Open Space / Woodlands /
Recreation.....0.2 acres

(c) Wetlands/Riparian
Areas 0 acres

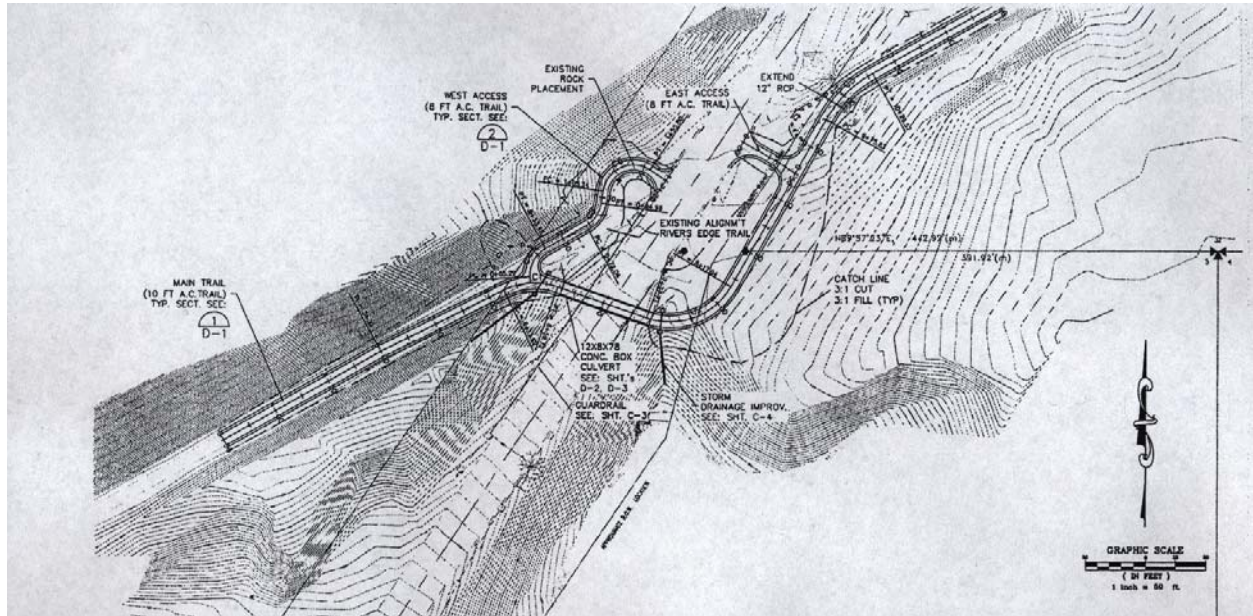
(d) Floodplain 0 acres

(e) Productive:
irrigated cropland..... 0 acres
dry cropland..... 0 acres
forestry 0 acres
rangeland..... 0 acres
other 0 acres

- 8a. Map/site plan: attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.



8b. Site Plan



9. Narrative Summary of the Proposed Action or Project including the Benefits and Purpose of the Proposed Action.

This project will allow pedestrians and Bicyclists to cross Giant Springs Road without exposing themselves to the hazards of vehicular traffic. The benefits will be safety to bikers and walkers and less traumatized vehicle drivers.

There have been several incidents where bikers and pedestrians have failed to yield to on coming traffic. This results in very hazardous situations. A tunnel under Giant Springs Road will increase the safety of these park visitors by a significant margin.

10. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) Permits:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
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None

(b) Funding:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
CTEP Grant	\$134,199.00
Recreational Trails Inc	\$20,130.00
Total	\$155,000.00

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
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None

11. List of Agencies Consulted During Preparation of the EA:

Fish, Wildlife and Parks:

Design and Construction Bureau

Region Four Wildlife Division

Region Four Parks Division

City of Great Falls,

City-County Planning Office

Recreational Trails Inc,

Montana Department of Transportation,

- 3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- < Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- 4 Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- 44 Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
< a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X			a
< c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- a. A minor amount of disruption will take place. No mitigations is necessary.

- 3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- < Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- 4 Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
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PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
< a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (also see 13 (c))			X			a.
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a)		X				
f. Other		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- A. Some reduction in air quality will occur during construction however this will be a temporary condition.

- 3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- < Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
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PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

3. <u>WATER</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
< a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of flood water or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. For P-R/D-J , will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c)		X				

- ³ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- < Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- ~~For P-R/D-J~~ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- ~~For P-R/D-J~~ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

m. For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a)		X				
n. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- < Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- < Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- << Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

4. <u>VEGETATION</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X			a
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				
f. For P-R/D-J , will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		X				
g. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- a. A small reduction in the overall amount of vegetative cover will result. Given the very small area in question no mitigation is necessary.

- 3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- < Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
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PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

< 5. <u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?			X			a
h. For For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f)		X				
i. For For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d)		X				
j. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

g. There will be a slight increase in the amount of disturbance to several species that use the Tunnel Coulee including Mule Deer and Red Fox. The trail already impacts these species and no cumulative stress should occur.

- 3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- < Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
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HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		X				
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- < Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- 4 Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
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HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

7. <u>LAND USE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of, or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other: _____		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- < Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- 4 Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
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HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARROADS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?			X			a
d. For P-R/D-J , will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

a. Construction of the Tunnel will result in an area that cannot be watched by law enforcement on the Trail. Several of these areas exist today and there have not been any documented cases where pedestrians or other recreationists have been assaulted at these sites. The risk therefore is considered minor.

- 3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- < Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- 4 Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- 44 Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?			X			a
f. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- a. The project will result in and overall increase in safety of the recreationists using the River's Edge Trail.

- 3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- < Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
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HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased used of any energy source?		X				
< e. Define projected revenue sources						a
< f. Define projected maintenance costs.		X				b
g. Other: _____		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- a. Revenue sources are limited to the City of Great Falls and Recreational Trail Incorporated.
- b. Maintenance will be completed by the City of Great Falls as stipulated in the River's Edge Trail Operations and Maintenance MOU.

- 3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- < Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- α Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- αα Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
<c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational or tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report)		X				
d. c For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c)		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

c. Tourism Report Attached.

- 3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- < Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- ~~c~~ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- ~~c~~ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
<a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a)		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

d. SHPO Clearance attached.

- 3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
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HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT ³				Can Impact Be Mitigated ³	Comment Index
	Unknown ³	None	Minor ³	Potentially Significant		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e)		X				
g. For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

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- ~~For~~ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

1. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

No Action.

River's Edge Trail will remain at the same grade as Giant Springs Road. Pedestrian and bicycle users will be exposed to the fast traffic coming down the hill on Giant Springs Road. No safety increases will be achieved.

Project as proposed.

The preferred alternative. This tunnel project will result in significant increases to public safety while posing no environmental risks.

2. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

No mitigation is necessary.

- ⊃ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
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- ⌘ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- ⌘⌘ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

3. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:

An EIS is not required.

With no anticipated significant impacts to the environment or the public the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this land donation.

4. Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?

A comment period of 30 days ending March 11, 2003 will be announced in the Great Falls Tribune and Helena Independent Record.

5. Duration of comment period if any.
30 days

6. Name, title, address and phone number of the Person(s) Responsible for Preparing the EA:

Dan Smith
Parks Operation Supervisor
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT. 59405 (406)454-5840.

- ⊃ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- < Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- ⌘ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- ⌘⌘ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

Giant Springs Road is a steep a narrow road descending into Giant Springs State Park from the very busy River Drive. The current at-grade junction of Giant Springs Road and the River's Edge Trail is a dangerous situation. Fish, Wildlife and Parks has heard of several anecdotal cases of cars having to slam their brakes on to avoid accidents with bikers and walkers who crossed assuming they have the right of way despite the trail having clear trail stop signs.

Vehicles going up the hill in the late afternoon often have blinding sunlight that effectively limits their driver's vision. This presents a very hazardous situation for those pedestrians and bicyclists attempting to cross Giant Springs Road.

Anecdotal evidence shows that pedestrians and bikers consistently ignore the stop signs on the River's Edge Trail. This behavior results in high risk of an accident.

By building the tunnel under Giant Springs Road we will increase public safety and reduce the risk of a serious accident. We can do this at little risk to the environment.

As another consideration, the Montana State Park system can reduce its liability at this hazardous crossing at little or no cost to the parks system since our partners are willing to perform this project.

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